

“Got Milk?” Development of a Children’s Hospital–Based Donor Human Milk Bank: King’s Daughters Milk Bank at CHKD

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Introduction

“**G**OT MILK?” WE DO! The King’s Daughters Milk Bank, the 18th milk bank in the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA), opened its freezers to breastmilk donors in June 2014. The King’s Daughters Milk Bank was established by the generous contributions of The King’s Daughters, the original founders of the Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters (CHKD) in Norfolk, VA. The story is one of over 100 years of giving back to the community, with a wonderful history of caring, volunteerism, and overwhelming community support, now providing donor human milk to the most medically fragile infants.

CHKD, located in Norfolk, is Virginia’s only freestanding, full-service pediatric hospital. It is a 206-bed regional pediatric referral center for Southeastern Virginia, Virginia’s Eastern Shore, and Northeastern North Carolina. It currently provides specialized medical subspecialty care to children with acute and chronic healthcare needs.

The King’s Daughters

The King’s Daughters organization began in January 1886, when 10 women met in New York City to form a Circle to develop their spiritual life and to be a service to the community. The first King’s Daughters Circle in Norfolk, Circle of Service, was founded in 1886 and still remains active today. In 1896, with a population of 48,000, Norfolk’s 14 Circles united to form the Norfolk City Union of The King’s Daughters in a common effort to provide health care to indigent families. In 1897, they established a visiting nurse service, with one nurse making 1,771 visits on foot to tend to poor families in her first year. The following years brought several upgrades to her service with a bike, a car, a food kitchen, and finally a small house in 1913 that served as the first Baby Clinic. In 1922, the first King’s Daughters Health Station opened. The first Children’s Hospital was complete in 1961, with major renovations in 1979 and 1994.

A review of the King’s Daughters archives found tax returns from 1915 noting to the Virginia Board of Charities “The Milk & Ice Fund,” providing to families 13,320 quarts of milk plus 76,365 pounds of ice with a total cost of \$1,647.

Today, the King’s Daughters is a corporation composed of Adult and Junior Circles with a combined membership of over 1,100 women throughout the Hampton Roads area. Membership in the organization is open to anyone who supports its mission to promote superior pediatric wellness through dedicated volunteerism in partnership with the Children’s Health System.

Donor Human Milk Treatment Program at CHKD

In March 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement noted:

The potent benefits of human milk are such that all preterm infants should receive human milk. Mother’s own milk, fresh or frozen, should be the primary diet, and it should be fortified appropriately for the infant born weighing less than 1.5 kg. If mother’s own milk is unavailable despite significant lactation support, pasteurized donor milk should be used.¹

The statement led to our neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) to choose to purchase donor human milk in order to provide this lifesaving medical treatment for our most critically ill neonates. Donor human milk is typically considered to be a source of nutrition, not a medical treatment, without special reimbursement for the expense.

After 6 months of purchasing donor human milk, the NICU team met with the King’s Daughters to share the news of this exciting new program. The new donor milk treatment program went along with the King’s Daughters mission of providing superior pediatric wellness with hopes to prevent or decrease infections, necrotizing enterocolitis, retinopathy of prematurity, and lung disease in our hospital’s preterm infants. The King’s Daughters were all ears. They listened intently, asking where donor human milk was purchased, was it safe, how was it processed, how much it cost. Finally, they asked, “Could we have our own donor human milk bank?” A few weeks later, the King’s Daughters offered to generously fund the start-up of the King’s Daughters Milk Bank at CHKD.

The King’s Daughters Milk Bank opened its doors in June 2014. As one of the HMBANA milk banks, we follow

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TABLE 1. EXAMPLE DONOR MOTHER EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Positive screening test for HIV 0-2, HTLV I and II, hepatitis B or C, and syphilis
Donor or partner with high-risk behaviors for HIV, HTLV, or hepatitis
Use of illegal drugs within the past 12 months
Smokes or uses tobacco products
Daily use of more than 2 ounces of hard liquor or its equivalent, in a 24-hour period
Organ or tissue transplant recipient in the last 12 months
Blood transfusion/blood products in the prior 4 months
Tattoo, body piercing, or needle stick injury in the last 12 months
Use of unapproved prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, or herbals
Traveled or lived in the United Kingdom for >3 months from 1980 to 1996, or >5 years from 1980 to the present

Excerpted from guidelines published by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America.²
 HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; HTLV, human T-cell lymphotropic virus.

guidelines written under the guidance of the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Association of Blood Banks. Our volunteer donors undergo a four-step screening process, which begins with a phone interview followed by hard copy documentation of health, lifestyle, medications, and travel. This is followed by blood screening for infectious diseases and letters from the physicians of both mother and her infant, stating they are in good health and that the mother is still providing milk to her thriving infant and is a good candidate to share her surplus milk.

We serum screen for human immunodeficiency virus, human T-cell lymphotropic virus, hepatitis B and C, and syphilis and are routinely evaluating the horizon for other illnesses that require enhanced risk assessment (i.e., Ebola) (Table 1).

Once fully screened and approved, our donors arrange to have their surplus frozen milk delivered to us. If they are local, they can stop by the Milk Bank to drop off their milk and have a tour. Out-of-town donors are sent a cooler to pack and ship overnight. All expenses of screening, mailing donor packets, blood screening, and shipping are covered by the Milk Bank.

Our First Year

We have proudly exceeded all of our initial goals and expectations. Our local military community has become an amazing wealth of donor human milk. We approved 240 donors our first year, over 2.5 times our initial goal. We have provided 37,000 ounces of milk to our NICU. In our second 6 months, we began to offer donor human milk for purchase to other hospitals and should be providing donor human milk for

outpatients by prescription soon. In addition to providing pasteurized donor milk, our Milk Bank team has been offering to assist other hospitals with protocols, consent forms, and other processes in order to facilitate development of a donor milk treatment program if they do not have one in place.

Development of the King's Daughters Milk Bank has been a fantastic journey, taking our founders back to their roots of delivering milk to infants and children in the community. We look forward to continued growth and expansion of the program to provide outpatient lactation services and support groups for all mothers in the community.

Disclosure Statement

No competing financial interests exist.

References

1. Section on Breastfeeding, American Academy of Pediatrics: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics* 2012;129:e827–e841.
2. *Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of a Donor Human Milk Bank*. Fort Worth, TX: Human Milk Banking Association of North America, 2013.

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